

THE REAL WORK

**Essential Sleight of Hand
For Street Operators**

Paul Price



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After becoming tired of creating illusions at children's birthday parties, Paul Price witnessed a game of Three Card Monte on the wharves of San Francisco. The following weekend, armed with his magician's knowledge of sleight of hand, our author threw away his magician's cloak and went to work on the streets. His first day at his new profession netted him \$200 in three hours.

In *The Real Work*, Paul Price shows you how to run various street scams, such as Three Card Monte, the Three Shell game, and other rip-offs. He shows you how to do it, and tells you how to get safely away with your ill-gotten gains. As the author reveals:

Sleight of hand is more than just hiding objects from plain view. It involves concealing the truth and controlling perception. A good sleight-of-hand artist manipulates the minds of his spectators as well as the physical objects that come into contact with his hands.

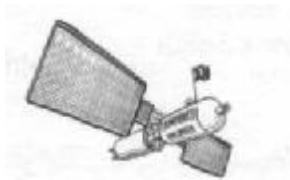
This book presents two ways of running cons: one, play on the sucker's belief that he can get something for nothing, and two, use the victim's emotions and perception against him — tug on his heart strings, exploit his conditioning. Remember that deep down, most people want to be tricked. Show them a rainbow, and they'll look for the gold. Your manipulations create rainbows, their ignorance does the rest.

After reading *The Real Work*, you will no longer be among the mindless mass of followers. You will have the power to profit from the public's simple-mindedness. Use it wisely. *Sold for informational and entertainment purposes only.*

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Essential Sleight of Hand For Street Operators

Paul Price



Loompanics Unlimited Port Townsend, Washington

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The Real Work: Essential Sleight of Hand For Street Operators

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Disclaimer:

This book has been written for educational and entertainment purposes only. It is not intended to condone or advocate cheating, stealing, vandalism, or any other criminal behavior. Many activities described in this book are illegal. In fact, many of the cons found in the no-sleight con section are felonies. The author assumes no responsibility for property damage, personal injury, or legal penalties directly or indirectly resulting from reading any part of this book.

Incidents, dates, names and locations have been altered to protect the innocent, guilty, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Dedication

To Sandman, The Duke, Scarecrow, and Slip-Jack-Willie. You guys always keep me on my toes.

To M. Smith. Thank you for your patience and company.

Introduction

I assume you are reading this book because you want to learn about street cons — *for educational purposes*, of course. Well, you have chosen wisely. The sleights and cons contained in this book have made many people lots of money. Some have used these techniques to con unsuspecting marks out of their hard-earned cash, while others have used these methods of manipulation to entertain and astound. On a personal note, I have "earned" as much money using these methods to entertain people as I have using them to fleece people. How you use these methods is up to you. Regardless of your purpose in using this text, if you want to execute the sleights properly, you must practice. Be not afraid, for I will show you the fastest, easiest, and most efficient way of learning the manipulations that follow. I will also include "outs" for those *rare* occasions when something goes wrong. Enough preaching — let's begin.

Section One

Card Manipulations



Chapter One

Three-Card Monte

The following card manipulations require practice to perform them properly. This is one reason why I am not afraid of revealing these treasured secrets. Once you have practiced these sleights sufficiently, even someone who knows what you are doing will not be able to detect them. I suggest that you practice all of the moves in front of a mirror before executing them in front of others. That being said, let's begin with the most profitable street hustle around, Three-Card Monte.

The object of the Three-Card Monte "game" is to pick the odd card (a.k.a. "money card") out from two other cards after the cards have been thoroughly mixed by the dealer. The odd card is usually a red queen; the other two cards are usually black number cards of the same value and suit. A common set up is two ten of spades and one queen of diamonds. Some hustlers call this 'The Lucky Lady" set up.

Although it is presented as a game of chance, Three-Card Monte is a con. There is absolutely no way for genuine players to win. Even on the extremely rare occasion when a mark miraculously selects the winning card, the worker will find a way to avoid paying off winning bets. One method I like to use to avoid paying off, is to have a shill (a friend of the operator) lay down more money on the winning card than the mark. I then explain that I only pay off the highest bettor. I see to it that my friend gives me my money back later. Another way to avoid paying a winning bet is to keep raising the bet. Eventually, one of two things will happen: the mark will get rattled and remove his bet or he'll run out of money. If he runs out of money, he can't place a bet. A less elegant way to get out of paying is to knock the cards over by "accident" or pretend that the police are coming and split. The moral to remember is that the worker never loses and the mark never wins.

Chapter Two

Monte Manipulations

It is important that the two odd cards have identical values and suits (this means you need to get a duplicate from another deck of cards). Also, the backs of the cards must have an overall back design. "Bee" brand cards are a good example of overall back design. Don't use cards like "Bicycle" brand that have a white border on the back.

Putting Work in the Cards

Putting "work" in the cards means preparing them for the manipulations. For Three-Card Monte, there are three steps you must take to prepare the cards:

1. Gather all three cards into one face-down packet.
2. Without putting a crease in the cards, gently bend the entire packet lengthwise down the center. The idea is to loosen the cards up by gently bending them back and forth. See Photo 1 on the next page.
3. Without creasing the corner, gently bend the right corner of the packet of cards by rolling it up around the right thumb.

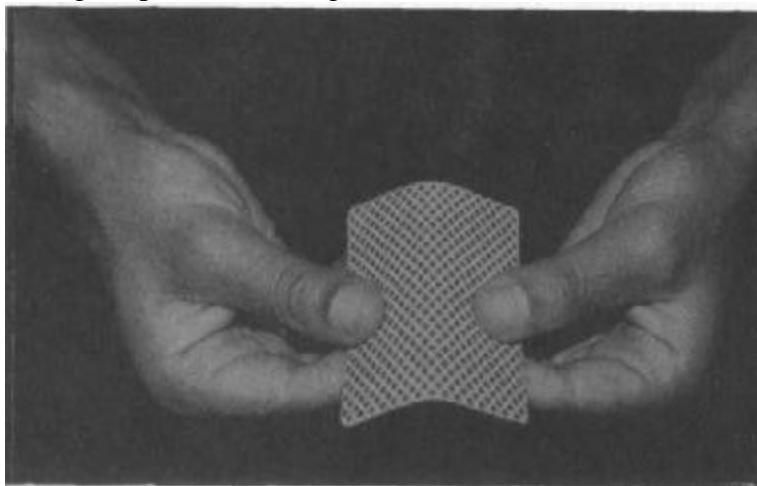


Photo 1

Make sure that the cards are NOT creased.

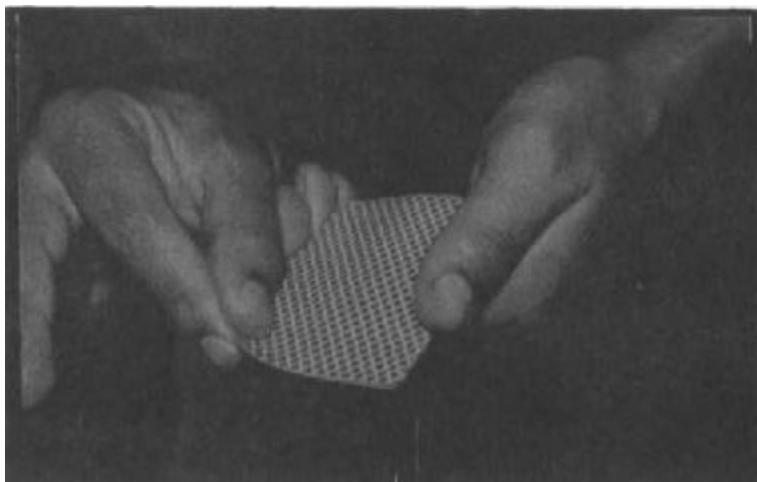


Photo 2

No creases!

Again, you want to loosen the corners up the same way you loosened the cards down the middle in step two. Don't break the corners by over-bending them. Revolve the packet so that the lower left corner becomes the upper right corner of the packet and loosen it in the same way you loosened the other corner. If you followed the instructions correctly, then the right corner of any card will always be ready for the secret crimp/uncrirnp move taught in a later section.

Well done! Now we're ready to learn the moves. For the following descriptions, I will assume you are using The Lucky Lady set up.

The Throw/Hype

1. Lay the three cards face down in a row on a flat surface.
2. Pick up one of the tens of spades, by the ends, near the right side corners, with your right-hand thumb and middle finger. See Photo 3.

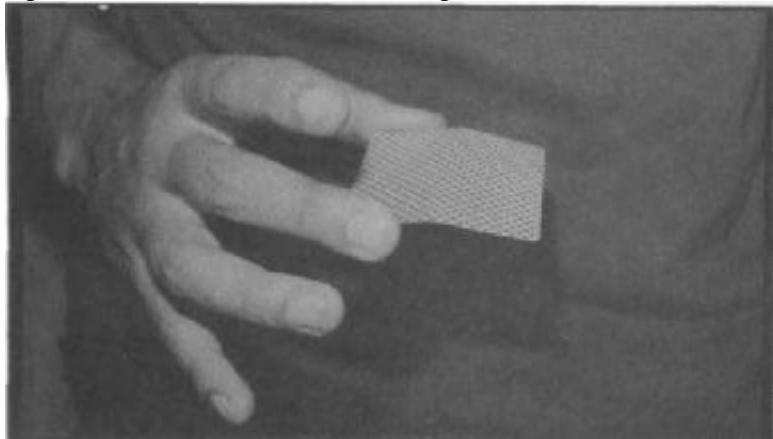


Photo 3

Note the finger placement.

3. Place this card over the face-down queen, allowing the left sides of the two cards to touch. From this position pick up the queen with right thumb and third finger. The position of the cards should be as follows: The right hand holds two cards; the top card (ten of spades) is held by the thumb and middle finger; below it is the red queen held by the ring finger (the one next to your pinkie) and thumb. The left edges of the cards should contact each other. The right edges of both cards are separated about a quarter of an inch. See Photo 4 below for correct positioning.



Photo 4
Top card is held with the middle finger.

4. The objective of the throw is to undetectably toss the top card instead of the bottom card. To accomplish this you must use the middle finger to release the top card as you turn the cards over from a face-up position to a facedown position. As the top card descends, you must quickly substitute the position of your middle finger for the position of your ring finger. This operation is relatively easy to do. Simply release pressure with the ring finger as the middle finger seizes the card while your index finger releases the card. See Photos 5 and 6.

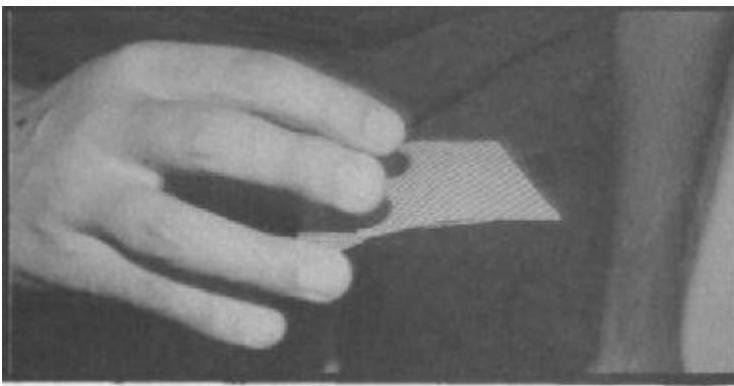


Photo 5
The middle finger releases the card and quickly repositions itself on the bottom card while the top card descends.

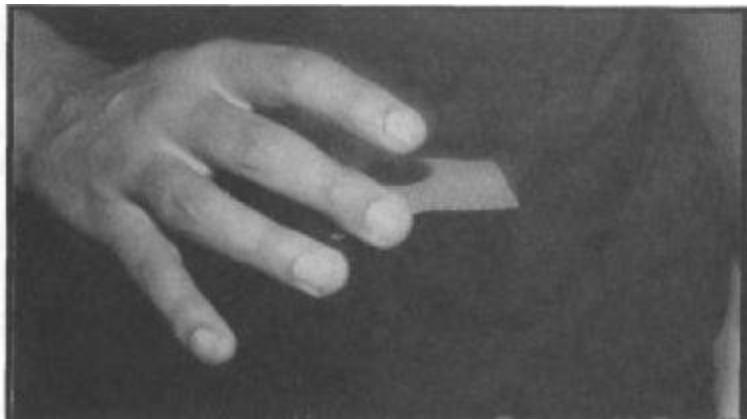


Photo 6

This is the final position of the middle finger after the top card has been thrown. It happens quickly, before the top card even hits the table.

The throw is a utility move because it will allow you to execute false displays and switches secretly. It is by far the most essential move in Three-Card Monte. Practice it in front of a mirror. You will be surprised at how quickly you acquire this move. Don't get frustrated if the cards get away from you. If you get really mad, rip up the cards and start again. Ripping cards is fun.

Tip: This move is called the throw because — you guessed it — the cards are thrown. You must move quickly and forcibly to release the top card. The throw is done in an arching motion. The repositioning of the middle finger is covered by the motion of throwing the card. A general principle in sleight of hand is that larger motions (throwing the card) cover smaller motions (repositioning the middle finger).

The fingering for the throw does *not* include the first finger. Many magic books teach this method because it makes the sleight easier to learn; it is, however, an inferior method because movement of the first finger is easy to detect.

Mexican Turnover

You can use a method called the Mexican Turnover to switch a card held in your hand for a face-down card that is tabled on a flat surface. The sleight will allow you to apparently turn one card over with another; in reality, with the action of turning one card over with another, you will actually be exchanging the cards. This sleight is very easy and very deceptive.

1. The card you want to switch in is held face-down in the right hand. The card you want to switch out should lie face-down on a flat surface, preferably a table.

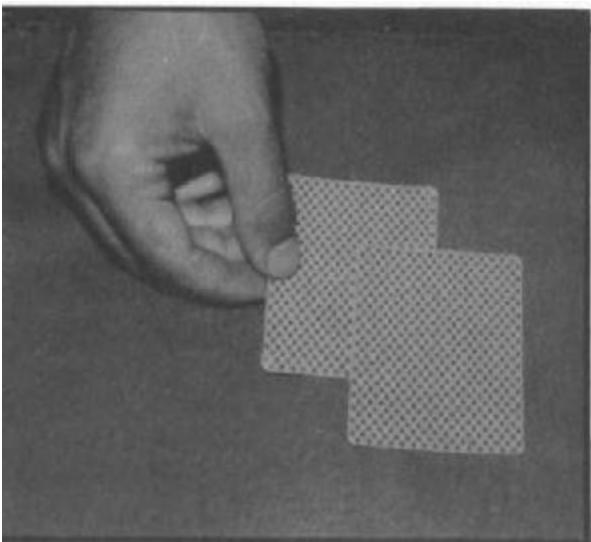


Photo 7

The card to be switched in goes beneath the tabled card.

2. Approach the tabled card with the right-hand card. While still holding onto the card, allow the card in your hand to be placed under the tabled card so that the cards are not perfectly aligned. The card in your hand should be toward you. See Photo 7.
3. Lever the tabled card over so that it begins to turn from a face-down position to a face-up position. As you do this, simply release the card in your hand, allowing it to assume a face-up position, and grab the tabled card. See Photo 8.
Keep the previously tabled card in your hand face-down. If you have done this correctly, you should have substituted the card in your hand for the card on the table. The actions should take only a fraction of a second. Although this seems bold, when done briskly and confidently, the switch is entirely deceptive.

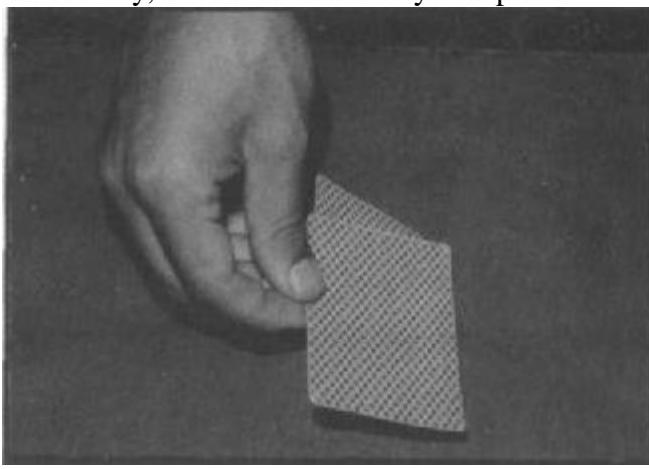


Photo 8

The card that was tabled is now in the hand and vice versa.

Pinkie Pull Down

For the purpose of Three-Card Monte, this move allows you to execute what is called a multiple lift. It is a preparation move.

1. Hold the packet of three cards face down in your left hand.
2. Using your left pinkie, push the cards to the left, beveling them. This should allow you to easily count the cards with your left pinkie.

3. Use your left pinkie to pull down the bottom card. This isn't a difficult move. Don't make it harder than it is. See Photo 9.

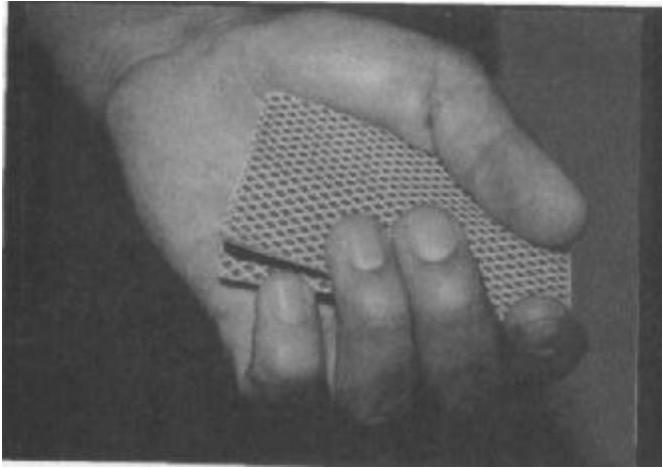


Photo 9

The left pinkie peels the bottom card. The break is exaggerated for teaching purposes.

Multiple Lift

After performing the pinkie pull down, flip the top two cards over as one card. See Photo 10.

The second card from the top will be displayed when this is done.

If you flip both cards over again and remove the top card, you have performed a false display and in essence effected a switch. If you use the top card to flip the second card over after the switch, you will have shown the face of one card twice. The effect is that you have shown two identical cards. In reality, you may actually have two different cards. I will explain and illustrate this in detail in the discussion of the False Display Method in the next chapter.

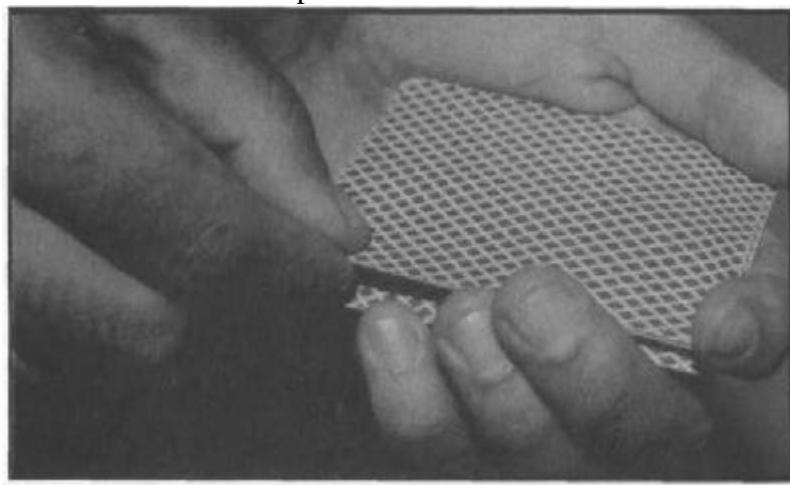


Photo 10

The top two cards are grasped as if they were one card. The break from the pinkie pull down facilitates this.

Chapter Three

Methods of Monte

The routines presented here progress from a beginning skill level to advanced. You do not, however, have to read them in order; you can try your hand at the expert method first if you want. At the end of this chapter, I will tell you the best ways to maximize your profits running the Monte hustle. The skills you learn will motivate you and reward your diligent practice. If you practiced the moves in the last chapter, especially the Pinkie Pull Down, Multiple Lift, and Mexican Turnover, then you're ready to learn the first routine.

False Display Method

The major trick to this method is showing the same card more than once. By doing this, you will be able to make the crowd believe that you are laying the queen in one place, when you're really putting her somewhere else. The effect is reinforced by a few "proving" moves. Later in this section, I provide a startling variation of the basic routine. Performed well, this method of Monte is very baffling.

Basic Routine:

Hold the cards face down in your hands; **the order from the top** of the cards to the bottom should be:

Black Ten Queen Black Ten

1. Do the Pinkie Pull Down and flip the top two cards over as one card (multiple lift). The queen should be staring you in the face. Turn both cards (queen and black ten) over face down as one card onto the pack and thumb off the top card onto the table. You have just switched in the black ten, but your spectators think it is the queen. The actual position of the cards in your left hand is:

Queen Black Ten

The other black ten is on the table, but the audience believes it to be the queen.

2. You are about to perform a move known as the "flushtration count." The False Display method will allow you to show the bottom black card twice. This reinforces the belief that the queen is on the table. Pinch the middle top of the card between your right thumb and forefinger and flip both cards over vertically. In other words, pivot the two cards as one unit toward yourself turning them face up and aligned. See Photo 11.

The bottom black ten should be face up in your left hand. Turn both cards face down again and thumb off the top card. The card you thumbed off is really the queen. I know this seems like a bold move. To be frank, it is a bold move — but if you do it casually and smoothly, people will not notice it.

Repeat the above steps with the remaining single card. If you are a very paranoid person, you can use the next step to dispel any suspicion associated with the flushtration move.



Photo 11

Both cards are flipped over as if they were one card. The left thumb and middle finger act as a hinge.

3. To execute a proving move, once the cards are laid down, pick up the ten on the left, then execute the Mexican Turnover on the center queen. This switches in the ten and puts the queen in your hand. Lay her on the table. Only do this if you sense some suspicion about the flushtration move.

Whether you use the proving move or not, resist the temptation to say, "I have two black tens," while you perform the flushtration move. Over-proving yourself is a liability. Dai Vernon — a great sleight of hand artist — once said, "Don't run when you're not being chased." Over-proving will not allay suspicion; it will arouse it.

To recap, here is the actual position of the cards on the table:

Black Ten, Queen, Black Ten

But the spectators think the position is: **Black Ten, Black Ten, Queen**

Now all you have to do is mix the cards on the table. Everyone thinks that the queen starts out at the far right, but really she's in the center. If someone does pick the queen, then pick up one of the black tens and use the Mexican Turnover to switch her out.

Variation of False Display:

You can use a variation of the above method to show two queens and one black card, when you actually have two black cards and one queen. The effect of this chicanery will result in a remarkable transposition of a queen and a black ten. This routine is best used for the short con. In other words, don't repeat it more than twice for the same crowd.

1. Use the same setup for the previous routine and follow the above routine up to, but not including, step two. This should put the cards in the following position: black card on the table (the audience thinks it is a queen), two cards in your hand, the queen on top, and the black card on the bottom.

2. Flip the queen over, then table her next to the other card. Flip the last card over and place it left of the queen. In these actions, no sleights have been executed. For once, you're actually doing what they think you're doing. The position of the cards on the table should be:

Black Ten, Queen, Black Ten

But the audience thinks that the cards are in the following order:

Black Ten, Queen, Queen

3. Openly change the position of the extreme left-hand card and the extreme right-hand

card. This does nothing to your actual set-up, but the spectators think you just changed the position of the queen and black ten. As you change the positions of the cards say, "If I move these cards, where is the ten and where is the queen?" In their minds the set up is now:

Queen, Queen, Black Ten But the actual position is: Black Ten, Queen, Black Ten Someone will point to the left-hand card saying that it is the queen. Flip the left-hand card over revealing the black ten. Everyone will be very surprised. Pick up the middle card (the queen) and use the Mexican Turnover to bring her in while you take the ten out. The entire effect provides an astonishing transposition. The Mexican Turnover cleans up the discrepancy of showing two tens. Even if a person chooses the right-hand card instead of the left-hand card, you are covered; all you have to do is flip over the right-hand card, then switch in the queen for the left-hand card. Not only is this method easy to learn, but it is also quite astounding. Remember not to overuse this method. Perform it a few times, collect your money, then leave.

He Palmed It Off

The variation false display routine has contributed to the myth of "palming off the money card. I know this from first-hand experience. I was using the routine at a bar when this blithering drunk waltzed in, sat down next to me, looked me straight in the eyes, then flipped all the cards over as he placed his bet on the revealed queen. Now, this startled everyone watching because they saw the real set-up of the cards. They were not amused by the solitary queen. I had only "won" about \$100 before this fellow came to rain on my parade. After the drunk turned the queen over someone in the audience blurted out, "He palmed one off. This guy is a cheat!" To make matters worse, I was completely surrounded by a somewhat inebriated mob. Needless to say, I was a bit uncomfortable. What could I do? After his announcement, I immediately replied, 'Thanks, Frank. Now let's show these people how a real cheat operates.' With that, I picked up the cards and changed the routine into a magic trick. I used the flushtration count along with some other moves to show all the cards to be queens, then promptly changed them back to tens, and finally I made the whole packet disappear. I then proceeded to produce a few coins, vanishing and reproducing them at will. The crowd was so impressed that they gave me an extra \$100 for the "performance."

The moral to the story is that you must prepare for all situations. Learn a few magic tricks with cards and coins. Why cards and coins? Because you rarely have a shortage of them. I suggest that you construct a short escape routine. This will be your secret weapon. Not only will this help you get out of difficult situations, but it will also increase your dexterity, confidence, and knowledge of sleights. I have several recommendations at the end of this book to get you started. If people think you're a cheat, they will beat you senseless; if they think you're a magician, they'll be delighted and amazed.

Mexican Monte

This is by far the easiest method to perform poorly. You must thoroughly master this method before presenting it to others. If you don't practice, you **will** get caught. It is based on the Mexican Turnover. Quite simply, you switch in cards at will. Needless to say, you switch the queen out when she is chosen. The important thing to remember here is uniformity of action. You must use the same motions to flip the cards over, even when you do not complete the switch. One strength of this routine over the previous routine is the fact that you don't need an extra card. It can be done impromptu wherever three cards

are present.

Basic Routine for Mexican Monte:

1. Display the cards.
2. Throw the cards face down on the playing surface.
3. Keep track of the queen.
4. Switch the queen out at will. This is not hard once you've mastered the Mexican Turnover. If the spectator chooses the queen, pick up a ten, and switch her out. You now have the queen safely in your hand. If someone picks a loser, always pick up the queen to flip the loser over. Of course you don't do the switch. You flip the loser over with the queen because this allows you to get in another bet, with better odds (50-50). If someone says the queen is in your hand, just switch her in for the ten on the table. It will look as if the queen was on the table the entire time.

Tip: The type of surface is important. It is easier to perform the Mexican Turnover on a rough, non-sticky surface. If the area is too slick or sticky, the move won't work as well or it will be too awkward to be done convincingly.

Expert Method

The previous routines are fine for the short con, but they may not stand up to extended scrutiny. If you want to work Monte like a business and really rake it in, then you will have to master the Expert Method. A good Monte worker can easily make a mid to high five-digit annual income working only two to three hours a day three to four days a week. Start with the Lucky Lady set-up (remember, what the order from top to bottom is: ten of spades, queen of diamonds, ten of spades). Make it look as if you are mixing the cards, but mentally keep track of the queen. Don't make this difficult. You only have to track one card. You can mix them any way you wish; just make sure you always end up with the queen in the center of the packet when you're done.

The purpose of this is to suggest that the game is on the level. You want your actions to imply that you're randomizing the cards before the game begins. Set the cards face down in front of you. The queen should be in the middle. Flip the tabled cards over, exposing their faces, then turn them face down. You've finished the psychological set-up.

Phase 1: Legit

1. Pick up the outer two black cards, displaying them palm up.
2. Pick up the queen with the right hand in preparation for the hype. Display it the same way you displayed the other cards.
3. Throw the queen to the left, but DO NOT PERFORM THE HYPE! You are conditioning the moves in this phase, so absolutely no sleight of hand is used yet.
4. The left hand throws its card to the left-hand side; the right hand throws its remaining card in the middle.
5. Pick up the right-hand card and the left-hand card and display them as you did in steps 1-2. Pick up the middle card the same way you did in step two.
6. Now throw the cards the same way you did in the previous step. The final order of the cards on the table should be:

Black Ten, Black Ten, Queen *Optional Warm-Up Move*

You can execute the hype in step 6. It will not affect the set-up because you will be switching a black card for a black card. I find that it builds confidence and it also adds uniformity of action. Uniform actions disarm many observers because the actions make sleights psychologically invisible. By performing this move you will fuse reality and

illusion, making it impossible to discern the difference between the two in the context of the routine. In other words, you'll really fuck with their minds.

7. Mix the cards on the table so that the queen is in the middle. You can do this any way you want to. Just don't make it too difficult to follow. You want people to be able to track the queen. Have your shill place a winning bet.

The Fake Move (or the Feint Move):

You may want to add a fake move. The fake move can be any obvious attempt to secretly switch the cards. It should always be done with the cards FACE DOWN. You may want to pick up the cards face down, then drop them in the same spot you picked them up at, but cross your hands after you let go to make it seem as if you threw them crosswise. You want the fake switch to be obvious. Your audience should know that cards have not changed positions. The purpose of the feint move is to get your audience to associate any sleight of hand to this fake move. This will aid the deceptiveness of the real move and keep them off-track entirely. To recap, the position of the cards after all of this should be:

Black Ten, Queen, Black Ten Phase 2: The Swindle

1. Repeat steps 1 and 2 of the above phase. The position of the cards before the hype should be: left hand holds a black ten; right hand holds the black ten and queen with the queen on the bottom. In other words, if you were to do the hype with your right hand, the queen would be retained while the black ten would be thrown to the table. This is precisely what you do in the next step.

2. Perform the hype. Mix the cards on the table. Make sure that the crowd can follow the card they think is the queen. The final position should be:

Queen, Black Ten, Black Ten

But the spectators should think the order is:

Black Ten, Queen, Black Ten

3. Do the fake move with the black tens as discussed earlier. Remember, they think that you are doing something to the black ten and queen. Your goal is to make it look as if you are trying to trick them with this obvious fake switch. By adding the fake move, you draw attention away from the real money card and divert it to the two losing cards. As a result, everybody focuses on the two cards in the fake move, neither of which is the queen. You're done with this phase. You can collect your winnings and stop or you can go in for the kill with the next phase.

Phase 3: The Miracle

Bent Corner Ruse:

You need an extra partner in crime for this one, but I will tell you how to do it alone in a moment. Here is the situation: you have just completed Phase Two, two shills are in the audience, one doesn't bet; the other does. As you pay shill #1, shill #2 decides to even the playing field by putting a crimp in the winning card.

How is this orchestrated? Quite simply, after collecting your winnings, an untied shoelace conveniently distracts you while your buddy bends the corner of the queen. When your attention returns to the table, you act as if you do not see the crimp.

To bend the queen without using a shill is a bit trickier. It is done while you explain to your audience how the game is played: pick up the queen and use it as a pointer. Flip the black cards so that they are face up on the table. Use the upper right corner of the queen to point to the black ten on your left, while pointing to it you get a little carried away and "accidentally" bend the right upper corner of the queen by pressing it against the table.

This will give the queen a crimp. You further impress the crimp by pointing to the black

card on your right in the same manner. As you do this, explain that tens are losers while the queen is the winner.

Either way, the queen will end up crimped at its upper right corner. Take a deep breath, for you are about to perform a miracle: Within the course of a second, under the strictest scrutiny, you will unbend the queen, bend the ten, and switch the ten for the queen. It will seem as if you transferred the bend in the queen to a black ten.

Uncrimp Move:

1. Pick up a black ten in each hand. Make sure that your right pinkie gets a grip on the right corner of the ten in your right hand. Place the right ring finger behind the card's right corner. Show the card, palm up. Now show the left-hand card in the same manner. As the left hand rotates palm up, the right hand does several things as it rotates palm down. Here is the right-hand action: the right pinkie pulls back while the right ring finger pushes forward. This will put a crimp in the right corner of the card.

Although this movement is virtually indiscernible, it is performed under strong misdirection. The misdirection is the display of the left-hand card. You must turn full attention to the left-hand card as your right hand works the other card. Here is where your preparation pays off. Because you have put work into the cards beforehand, a bend in the corner of one card will look identical to a bend in the corner of another card.

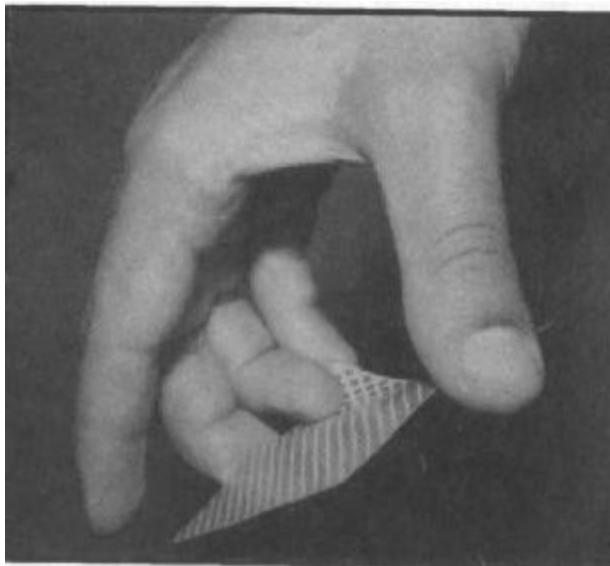


Photo 12

Most of the work goes to the pinkie — it pulls as the other finger pushes.

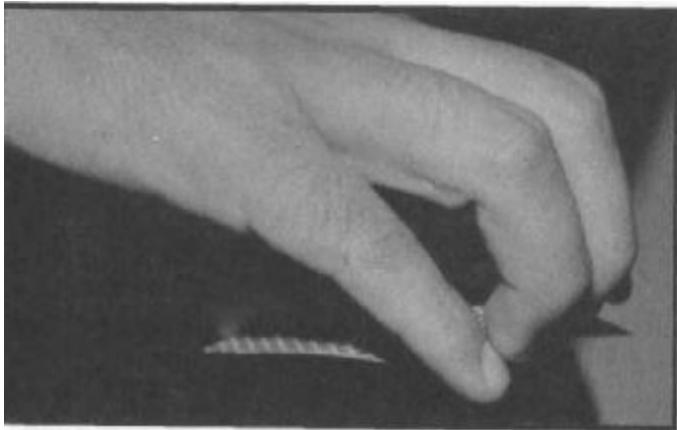


Photo 13

More work for your pinkie — it pushes while the other finger pulls.

2. Pick the queen in preparation for the throw (black ten on top, queen on the bottom). Don't worry about the crimp in the black ten showing because the position of your hand prevents it from being seen. Execute the throw. If there are no discrepancies, the bent card is where it is supposed to be in the spectators' minds. The crimp in the ten really sells the switch.
3. Now you need to get the bend out of the queen. This is very simple. Just reverse the movement of the crimp move: The right pinkie grips the corner of the card. The index finger pulls up while the pinkie pushes down.

The move is done quickly while the hands cross and the cards are laid on the table. Make sure that you mix the cards on the table a bit. You should add the fake move discussed earlier as a clincher.

Maximizing Profits

Now that you know all the sleights and routines, I will tell you how to maximize profits. You need to take the time to explain the game and give your odds. You have to sell the game.

Convince them that the game is easy to play and that the odds are in their favor. Here are the odds you give them: a \$40 minimum bet returns \$100. In other words, the dealer loses \$60. A \$100 maximum bet pays \$250 (but you never know what people will bet, so this is just a suggestion), so the dealer loses \$150. In explaining the odds, you want to imply that the players have the upper hand. Emphasize that there are only three cards; therefore, it is likely that someone will win one out of three times.

You want the mark to conclude that on average, he will become \$20 richer just by playing three times. Here is the primrose path you lead him down: if he loses twice he has lost \$80, but if he wins one time out of three bets, not only will he recuperate his loss, but he also makes \$20 because winning pays \$100. All he has to do is play, and chance will reward him.

The temptation to play will become irresistible when he actually sees you "lose" money to your shill. It is important to visibly manifest disappointment whenever you pay off a shill. This always stimulates bets for the next round.

Feel free to create rules that work to your advantage. Remember: you control the odds, action, play, and pay. You don't have to pay winners, but you always collect from the losers. You're a walking casino and your shills enforce your rules. Think about it: If a player refuses to pay-up when you're working alone, you're in trouble. Now, imagine

someone trying to filch when your associates (shills) are in the crowd. Now who's in trouble?

Speaking of shills, you should develop a signaling system that lets them know where the winning card is. It can be verbal, but this is usually very risky because an astute observer may catch it. I suggest that you use the scratch method. It is very simple: you just scratch the side of your body that is nearest the card. The beauty of this method is that it can be done with both hands so no single hand is associated with card placement. Moreover, scratching is a very natural gesture — one that most people ignore. Just make sure that you are subtle about it. You may even want to devise a system whereby you scratch the side of your body OPPOSITE to the card. This will confuse even the most observant spectator. To take it even further, you can create a signal that tells your shill that you are changing the pattern; for example, removing your hat or another article of clothing may signal that scratches will be on the same side as the card; placing the hat or the article of clothing back on may signal that scratches will be on the opposite side. When the card is in the middle, simply place both hands at your side or touch your hands together. These actions will ensure that your shill always "bets" on the winning card.

Although Monte can be worked alone, I suggest that you work with shills. It is much safer. Not only will they help you perform the con better, but they will also protect you if things get out of hand. In the next section I will teach a con that seems remarkably similar to the Three-Card Monte, but yet is entirely different. You will also learn how to cash in on *betting cycles*.

Section Two

Object Manipulation



Chapter One

Three-Shell Game

Your initial investment for this con is \$0, but the return will be extraordinary. I love this con because you literally make something from nothing. Anyone willing to put in a few hours practice can make a minimum of at least \$80 an hour working this routine on the streets, as a trick or as a con.

Three plastic bottle caps are aligned in a horizontal row. A rubber band or small piece of sponge is openly placed beneath one of the caps — usually the middle one — then the caps are mixed. The object of the game is to guess where the sponge/rubber band is concealed. It is absolutely impossible for the victim to guess the location of the rubber band because you have complete control over where it is or isn't. This high level of control will allow you to cash in on "betting cycles."

Supplies:

Three plastic bottle caps and one wadded up rubber band or quarter-inch cube cut from a sponge. The bottle caps should be identical in size, shape, and color. You may have to experiment with different sizes; I find that most two-liter size caps work well. Tear off the extra plastic ridge that circles the bottom of most caps. You want the cap to be level on the playing surface. The rubber band can be any color you wish; I prefer green. Tie it up into a small ball. You may instead cut out a small quarter-inch cube from a sponge.

Three-Shell Sleights

Slide Steal:

1. Place the sponge/rubber band underneath the cap.
2. Move the cap forward. As you do this, raise the back of the cap slightly. The forward motion of the cap along with the traction of the working surface will cause the sponge/rubber band to roll out from under the cap. Once the sponge/rubber band is out, it is pressed against the side of the thumb tip by the ball of the middle finger. The steal is usually made with the right hand, but it is very easy to learn to do it with both hands. See Photo 14.



Photo 14

Exposed view. The band is concealed between the middle finger and fleshy thumb pad as the cap is pushed

forward.

This move should be done briskly. Remember that larger actions cover smaller actions so the slight lift of the cap will not be noticed. The concealment of the sponge is always the same: it is held between the middle finger and tip of the thumb. It is always accomplished through the steal.

The Load:

1. This is just a reversal of the steal: the cap to be loaded is positioned slightly forward, out of alignment with the other two caps. The hand that conceals the sponge/rubber band seizes the cap with the index finger and thumb. Release the pressure of the middle finger on the tip of the thumb and drag the cap back over the sponge/rubber band. The traction of the sponge/rubber band will keep it in place as the slightly raised cap is replaced over it. The move should be done in the same manner as the steal.

Turn-Over Load:

1. The cap in which the sponge/rubber band will be loaded is turned face up on the playing surface.
2. The hand holding the concealed sponge/rubber band moves over the cap. The first finger and thumb take hold of the cap's rim, then flip it over with a snap. As this happens the sponge/rubber band is dropped by the middle finger, which releases its pressure against the thumb tip. The sponge/rubber band should fall to the surface a split second before the cap slams down. This move is a bit tricky. Do it slowly, then build up speed. Proper execution is more important than speed. Here are Photos 15 and 16 to clarify the process:



Photo 15

Exposed view. The speed of the turnover prevents the load from being seen



Photo 16

Note that the middle finger and thumb still touch even though they are not concealing the band.

Basic Routine: Phase 1: The Bait

1. Place the caps in a row on the table with the sponge/rubber band positioned in front of them.
2. Cover the sponge/rubber band with the center cap. DO NOT lift the cap off the table to do this. Simply hinge it back and openly cover the sponge/rubber band. Now push the cap forward the same way you would as if you were going to steal the sponge/rubber band, but DON'T STEAL the sponge/rubber band.
3. Push the other two caps forward and mix the caps around, but make sure that everyone knows where the sponge/rubber band is. At this point, a shill can bet on the winner. This phase shows everyone watching that you are an above-the-board, stand-up kind of guy.

Tip: The way that you reveal the winner is important. Simply grab both losing caps with each hand and drag them back toward yourself. This action mimics the loading move that will come in the next phase.

Phase 2: The Hook

1. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with one modification: in step two, you actually make the steal. The cap that everyone thinks has the sponge/rubber band is now empty because the sponge/rubber band is safely concealed in your right hand.
2. Push the other two caps forward and mix the caps around a bit. All of the caps are now aligned, forward, and empty. Once the sucker has placed his bet, drag the two losing caps toward yourself and load the one in your right hand. The way you reveal the losing cap is important. You must flip it over in preparation for the turnover load.

At this point, you can choose to raise the bet, giving 50-50 odds. This always convinces a reluctant spectator to bet. If he chooses the cap you just loaded, then simply steal the sponge out as you push the cap forward. Now you understand why I told you always to push selected caps forward in the bait phase. If someone insists on seeing the contents of the other cap, simply load it as you drag it toward yourself.

Phase 3: Hook, Line, and Sinker

1. Regardless of your choice in the previous phase, you must reveal the location of the sponge/rubber band. Flip the other two caps over and align them with the center cap (it should have been flipped over; if you forgot to do it, don't worry — just flip it over along with the others). They should be pushed slightly forward. Place the sponge/rubber band behind the cap on the right hand side and openly flip the cap over so that it covers the sponge/rubber band. Push the cap forward and make the steal.

2. Grab the center cap (it should be turned upside down), then execute the Turn Over Load. Flip the left cap over in a similar manner. The position of the caps should be as follows:

Empty Cap, Loaded Cap, Empty Cap (you stole the band from this one).

Now drag the left cap around the center cap so that it rests on the right side of the cap on the right (the one you stole the band from). The final position should be:

Loaded Cap, Empty Cap, Empty Cap.

Change the positions of the center and right caps a few times and accept bets. This phase will rake it in for you.

Tip: The steal can only be done on a surface that grabs the rubber band/sponge. I suggest you practice on different surfaces to get a feel for how they affect the "bite" of the sponge/rubber band. The sponge or rubber band should hang onto the surface when the cap is pushed forward. With practice, however, the move can be done on smoother surfaces.

Capping Off With Betting Cycles

It is best to use shills to draw in more participants, but this is not necessary. The main difference between Three-Card Monte and the Three-Shell Game is the fact that you can actually pay off winners, if you so choose. Wait a minute! Pay out?! I'm supposed to make money, not lose it!

Paying out has its advantages. First, you choose which bets you pay off. Needless to say, you always collect the bets on the caps that have the most money on them and always pay off on the cap that has the least amount of money bet on it. Second, it encourages reluctant people to get in on the action. Since people actually win at the game, they tend to bet more and more money. Better yet, when the losers see you use their money to pay winners off, they get peeved — so peeved that rather than leave the game, they bet more money! You'll always be in the green and the fact that you sprinkle some chump change around to a few souls will only increase your profits.

Paying off bets in this way is good because it spawns what I like to call *betting cycles*. A betting cycle occurs when a person wins some money, loses it, then keeps betting in a vain attempt to re-win it. Betting cycles are nearly impossible to escape. The cycle ends when the mark runs out of cash.

A Betting Cycle Beauty

When I was working the Three-Shell Game on the wharfs of San Francisco, I realized just how powerful betting cycles can be. A large crowd had gathered around me, when this middle-age guy strutted up and pushed his way to the playing table. He slowly pulled the sleeve back on his silk Armani suit, flashing his gold Rolex to everyone as he conspicuously noted the time. After making his entrance, he tossed down five bucks next to the only cap that hadn't been bet on. Normally, I don't accept bets below ten, but I sensed something about this guy, so I made an exception. When I paid him, he smirked condescendingly. The next round went the same way. When I paid him for his second win, he snickered, saying, "You're not very good at this are you?" I had to contain my laughter; because I guess he didn't notice that I was making \$80 for every ten I paid him. Then it happened. After winning just two five dollar bets, the guy pulls out a wad of fifties, counts off two of them, then places them next to the "winning" cap. Before his money reached the cap, I distinctly heard him whisper, "I'm gonna clean you out, buddy." For some inexplicable reason, from that point on, the band was never where he wanted it

to be. Each time he lost, he counted off more fifties from his dwindling stack of cash. In less than fifteen minutes, the entire roll of money was mine. Believe it or not, after losing his entire bankroll, he eagerly asked me, "Where is the nearest ATM, guy?" I responded with, "I don't know, but that's a very nice watch." Don't underestimate the power of a betting cycle. Sometimes losing is winning.

Chapter Two

Miscellaneous Sleights

Here is a collection of very useful sleights. They require some practice, but all of them are well worth it. The shuttle pass is actually used for coin work, but I discovered that it works even better for switching in crooked dice. At the end of this chapter, I will provide you with a well-orchestrated method of switching loaded dice in and out of any dice game. Once you master the sleights in this section, you will be able to manipulate any object that touches your hands.

Shuttle Pass

The shuttle pass is a very deceptive two-handed switch for any object small enough to be held in the hand. The object never seems to go out of sight. The basic mechanics of the move first appeared in Sachs' *Sleight of Hand* — originally published in 1885. Needless to say, it is an effective sleight that has stood the test of time. Before learning the shuttle pass you must learn the following two sleights:



Photo 17

Exposed view. Note that the fingers are relaxed and slightly spread apart. The object is held between the muscle at the base of the thumb and the muscle just below the base of the pinkie.

You should practice palming flat objects, such as coins. They are by far the most difficult objects to palm. Once you are adept at palming coins, palming loose items such as dice will be much easier. Dice can be tricky to palm at first because they like to split apart. At the end of the chapter, I provide a very clever trick to help you securely palm dice and other free objects.

Palming and False Transfer

Palming: Palming is not that difficult. The important thing to remember is that the hand should look relaxed. It should never look like a claw. See Photo 17 for an exposed view and proper hand tension.

Practice palming daily. At first the muscles in your hands will become sore, but after about a week the soreness disappears completely. You must keep those muscles conditioned.

Moisturizer is essential. The palms of your hands should be relatively soft. If your hands

have lots of calluses, many objects will slip off. It is also important that you learn to palm with both hands — in fact, you won't be able **to** execute the shuttle pass correctly unless you do.

The object of the false transfer is to pretend to put something in one hand while secretly retaining it in the other. Magicians call this move a "vanish" because it looks like the object disappears from the hand it was supposedly placed into.

1. Hold the object palm up in your left hand
2. Pretend to throw it into your right hand, **but palm it** in your left hand. This may sound simple, but it requires some practice in front of a mirror to perfect. **The** best way to learn the move is to actually toss an item from your left hand to your right hand, then mimic those motions while you palm the item.

Tip: The fingers of the hand that hold the item should open slightly as if they are letting the object go. The hand should jerk forward, then recoil slightly as if it were tossing the item. The most important point to remember is that the hand that secretly retains the object should look relaxed. Let it hang limply. Don't keep it tense.

The hand that "receives" the object should receive **it** in a way that obscures the object from view. This is accomplished by alternating the orientation of the hands. The fingers of the receiving hand close around the imaginary object. The hand that holds the imaginary object should be slightly puffed, giving the impression that the object is actually there.

Shuttle Pass Mechanics: Set up:

The right hand palms the object that will be switched in. The left hand holds the object that will be switched out. The items should look identical.

1. Starting position is as follows: left hand is palm up displaying its object; the right hand palm down, concealing its object.
2. The left hand rotates palm down in a throwing motion while it retains the item. (See Photo 18.)



Photo 18

The right hand is palming the object to be switched in. The left hand rotates palm-down, retaining the object to be switched out.

As the item in the left hand is being "thrown," the right hand rotates palm-up in a catching action, displaying the switched-in item.



Photo 19

The right hand rotates palm-up and produces its palmed item while the left hand rotates palm-down and palms its item.

This is done in a rocking motion. The illusion is that the item in the left hand is being thrown into the right hand. When this is performed correctly, it is impossible to tell that a switch has occurred. Practice these movements in front of a mirror — you will be surprised at how deceptive the switch is.

Dice Switch:

Have you ever wanted to turn the table in a craps game? Well, you can. All you have to do is switch in the tops (gaffed/rigged dice) when it is your turn, then switch them out when your turn is over. Easier said than done, right? Not anymore.

Since it is inconvenient and dangerous to palm rigged dice for the entire duration of a game, you may wonder how it is possible to get the loaded dice in your hands without being noticed. The answer is preparation. To perform switches effectively, you must orchestrate your actions. You need to create reasons to go into your pockets to retrieve your loaded dice and deposit the genuine dice. Your movements must be carefully choreographed.

Here is an example: In the act of lighting a cigarette, you will palm out some loaded dice, switch them in, then temporarily pocket the clean dice. You will reverse the actions to bring the genuine dice back in when your turn is over.

Set-up: the left pocket contains a cigarette pack, the right pocket contains loaded dice and a lighter.

Just before your turn, your right hand goes into your right pocket. While your hand is in your pocket it palms the dice and grabs the lighter. Visibly bring the lighter out with the dice palmed in the same hand. Holding objects while you palm something is good cover because it gives your hand a natural look.

With your left hand, reach into your left pocket and retrieve the cigarettes. Take out a cigarette, but leave the pack on the table. Light the cigarette. Put the lighter back into your right pocket. By now it should be your turn. If it isn't, just smoke until your turn comes. Pick up the clean dice with your left hand and hold them in the palming position. Perform the shuttle pass, producing the loaded dice in the right hand. Roll the loaded dice. Pick up the cigarette pack with your left hand, then place the pack, along with the clean dice, into your left pocket.

When you want to switch tops out, go through the same motions, but palm the dice in the left hand when you bring the cigarettes out. This time leave the lighter on the table.

Shuttle pass the dice from the right hand to the left hand. Pocket the lighter and dice by

dropping them both into your right pocket. You are now completely reset and ready to do this all night long.

Tip: If you have difficulty palming dice in your left hand, then here is a little known secret for you: use hair spray on your palms. The small amount of adhesion will prevent the dice from getting away from you. Since the adhesion is relatively weak, you will have no problem separating the dice from your palm when you need to. This trick is used by many pickpockets. They apply the hair spray to their fingertips. The stickiness helps them steal watches, wallets, keys, etc., from their victims.

I could write an entire book about rigging dice, but many have been written already. A fairly reliable one is *The Professional Gambler's Handbook* by Weasel Murphy. The Shuttle Pass will work with most of the rigs he explains. Darwin Ortiz also talks about different gaffed dice in *Gambling Scams*.

Lyons Bill Switch

The Lyons Bill Switch is an impromptu method of switching larger bills for smaller ones and vice versa. The uses for this sleight are numerous. It is excellent for swapping photocopied money for real money. With the newer fives and tens out, it makes for a great money gag. You take a new \$100 bill and switch it for a new \$10 bill, or likewise a new \$50 bill for a new \$5 bill.

The major strength of the switch is the fact that it allows you to show both hands empty — front and back — while you conceal the extra bill. The principle that this sleight uses is known as the shell principle. The idea is that the outer object fits over the concealed object the way a shell fits over a crab. When the objects are displayed in this manner, they are said to be "nested."

The key to this sleight is the method of folding; both of the bills must be individually folded in half lengthwise, then in half crosswise again. The folded bill should look like a tent. You need to have a pre-folded bill in your pocket before the switch occurs. The bill to be switched in will be on top, while the bill to be switched out will be underneath. The manner of folding allows the two bills to nest together. For the purpose of the switch, you will use the bill that you intend to bring in as a shell to cover the bill that you intend to bring out.

1. Keep the pre-folded bill in your pocket. You have to finger palm it before you get hold of the bill to be switched out. Finger palming is easy: just slightly bend your fingers and conceal the bill, and since you will be holding the other bill, your hands will look very natural. Once you have the bill to be switched out in the hand that is finger palming the bill to be switched in, you are ready to begin the switch.
2. Casually fold the bill to be switched out (yes, you are still palming the other bill as you do this). Don't meticulously fold it. Just make it look as if you are toying with the bill.
3. Pass the newly folded bill from hand to hand. At some point let it rest in your left hand between the left thumb and index finger. The pre-folded bill should be in your right hand. Let the fold of the palmed bill (the one in the right) open just enough so that the left-hand bill can nest inside. In other words, the right-hand tent needs to be open enough to allow the left-hand tent to fit inside:

Tent #1: / \ (Bill to be switched in (\$1 in Photo 20 and 21) Tent #2: / \ (Bill to be switched out (\$5 in Photo 20)

The bills can now be displayed together as one bill in the right hand. You can safely show both sides of both hands without fear of flashing the concealed bill.

4. You're halfway through the switch. To complete the switch; raise your right thumb so the tent of the outer "dummy" bill slightly opens.

The opening should give you enough room to put your right thumb on the nested bill (the one to be switched out). Once this is done, the left takes the top bill, while the right hand uses its thumb to swing the nested bill into the right hand finger palm position.



Photo 20

The right thumb does most of the work. It swings the inner bill toward the palm and pushes the outer bill up.

This action should be practiced in front of a mirror. From the front, the action is hidden. The mechanics are not difficult, but making the move look unchoreographed takes a few minutes of practice.

Once the switch is made, pocket the bill in your right hand. The best way to do this is to go into your pocket to bring something else out. While your right hand is in your pocket drop the bill. In general, I like to bring something out of my pocket when I drop off a hidden item. The reverse is true for picking needed items up: I like to put visible objects away while I retrieve something from my pocket.



Photo 21

The curled fingers completely conceal the other bill.

The best application for this switch is switching color photocopied money for real money. All you have to do is color photocopy a new bill. Fold the counterfeit bill in the manner described. Keep it in your pocket. Whenever you see someone with a new bill, just act as if you have never seen the new bills before. While you toy with the borrowed bill, the switch is made. There are many more uses for this switch, but this one is novel. By the way, a minor variation of this switch is used for the old torn and restored napkin trick.

Pocket Switch

This is the easiest of all. All you have to do is drop the item to be switched out into your pocket; while your hand is in your pocket you just pick up the item to be switched in. It would be highly suspicious if you just stuck your hand in your pocket for no reason. So the question is: "How do you go into your pocket without being caught?" The answer is: use a "red herring."

A red herring is anything designed to keep someone on your trail off track. Old-time criminals used to use red herrings to hide their scent when they escaped from prison. For our purposes, we will use a red herring item to give us an excuse to put our hand in our pocket. The red herring item in your pocket can be just about anything you want it to be. It could be a lighter, cigarette, pen, pencil, anything.

Hold the item to be switched out in your right hand: Go into your pocket and drop it. Pick up the item to be switched-in along with the extra red herring item. Come out with both the switched-in item and the red herring item. Make sure that both the red herring item and the switched in item are visible. You want your spectators to think that you went into your pocket to retrieve something. The switch is complete.

This sleight is excellent for switching out the tape dollar, which will be described in the Soda Machine Capers, for a bona fide bill. Simply keep a quarter in your pocket and a genuine dollar in your pocket. If someone comes over to you while you are using the tape dollar, pick up the real dollar and quarter. You're clean.

Alternative Pocket Switch

You can hide the Pocket Switch from the audience by using your body as a cover. This method doesn't require a red herring item because the audience should not be aware that you dived into your pocket. You must use your body to cover your actions.

This is how you do it. Stand in front of a mirror. Now turn your body so one side is facing the mirror. You should notice that the side away from the mirror becomes obstructed from view. Once you understand the angles, all you have to do is turn your body enough to obstruct your spectators' view of your hand, then dip into your pocket during the obstruction, dropping the item to be switched out while picking up the item to be switched in. When you bring your hand back into view, it should be away from your body. This requires a bit of practice, but the results are worth it.

Now that you know how to manipulate objects, it's time to learn how to manipulate machines and people. The next section will tell you how to run cons and capers that require no sleight of hand skills whatsoever.

Section Three

No-Sleight Cons



Chapter One

Soda Machine Capers

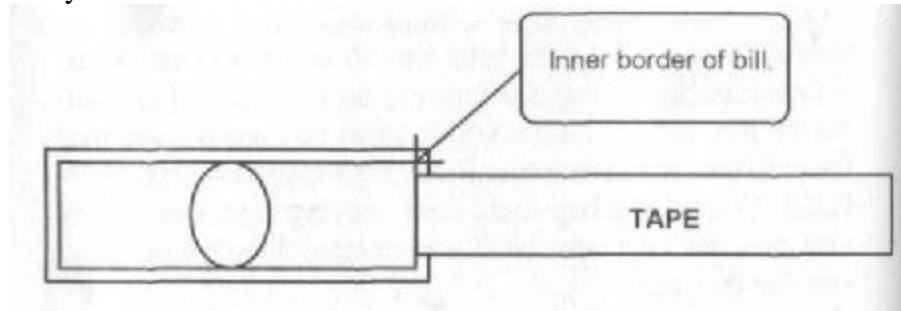
Your friends at the soda companies have made it very easy for you to get free soda and cash from their machines. But they're not the only ones. Many of the techniques used in this chapter will work on other vending machines as well. Again, I must remind you about the disclaimer at the beginning of the book.

Tape Dollar

Many articles have been written about tape dollars, but none of them describe the best way to construct one. Some of the contraptions suggested simply do not work. If you follow the instructions I am about to give, you will not run into that problem. But remember: DON'T SKIMP ON THE SUPPLIES. When I say buy some clear packing tape, I mean buy some clear packing tape, NOT scotch tape. Scotch tape is too weak for this job.

Supplies: *Transparent packing tape, wax paper, scissors, and a crisp bill.*

1. Cut out a large rectangular sheet from the wax paper. Tape the corners of the paper to a table. This will serve as a non-stick mat.
2. Set up your crisp dollar on the center of the wax paper.
3. Unroll, but do not cut off, 10" to 11" of the clear packing tape. Align and affix the tape to the inner green border of the bill. Once this is done, cut the tape from the roll.
4. Flip the dollar and tape over, so that the sticky side of the tape is face up. Curl over a portion of the tape so that it sticks to the wax paper mat.
5. Now comes the tricky part. Unroll another 10" to 11" strip of tape. Align it with the green border of the dollar the same way you did with the other strip of tape. Since both sticky sides of tape are facing each other, this is somewhat difficult to do. You must avoid getting air bubbles between the two strips.
6. Once the two strips are together, cut off the last strip from the roll of tape. The gaff is ready to make its debut.



Now that you have the gaffed bill, you need to learn how to use it. Insert the dollar into the bill receiver of a vending machine. Once the bill is all the way in and you hear or feel it stop, quickly yank on the dollar. You should see a dollar amount registered and hear the exchange release clank. If it doesn't work, try again. If it still doesn't work, then leave the dollar in while you make your selection. As soon as the machine attempts to pull the dollar in further, fiercely pull it out. This requires a bit of a knack, but you will develop it very quickly.

Unfortunately, tape dollars don't work in all machines. Luckily, there is a pretty easy way to tell which machines work and which ones don't work. If the machine rejects the dollar

when the tape is reached, then find another machine. If the machine accepts the dollar past the tapeline, then keep playing with it until it releases its bounty. You do not have to limit yourself to vending machines: school copiers, change machines, and bill-operated Lotto machines are all fair game.

Post Office Pay-Off

When I was in Sacramento, my friends and I went to a post office to mail some chain letters. Since we always carry our trusty tape dollars with us, we decided to try getting some free postage from the stamp machines. To our surprise, the tapers worked. But that's not all: the machines accepted \$20.00 bills. We came back a few minutes later armed with our taped twenties and left with our pockets filled with Susan B. Anthony dollars.

I don't recommend doing this at the post office because tampering with their machines is a Federal offense. Keep your tape dollar with you always, though — you never know what you will find.

Remember that the pocket switch will save your ass if someone accuses you of using a rigged dollar.

Saline Away with Soda and Cash

If you are the type of person who marched into your friend's room, snatched his plaster piggy bank, slammed it against the wall, then picked the quarters from the pennies, this caper is for you. You will cause a minimum of \$500 damage to the afflicted machine. It will visibly react to your attack: you will hear its innards pop and crack, smell its frying plastic, and witness its smoky demise. So put on your horns and let's begin.

Choosing a machine is probably the most important thing you can do. A secluded, older machine is ideal. Make sure it is plugged in and working. Some of the newer machines have plastic coin slots designed to protect them from the onslaught of salt — I will tell you how to work around this shortly.

Preparation and Requirements:

Supplies: *Iodized salt, water, squirt gun or plastic bottle, and funnel.*

1. Bring the water to a rolling boil, then dump in as much salt as you can. Saturate the water. Too much salt is almost enough.
2. Once the solution is ready, wait for it to cool down enough so that you can fill your squirt gun. A pump-type squirt gun (a.k.a. water cannon) works best. You can use the regular kind, but you will be squirting the saline solution for a long time. You can also use a two-liter bottle and a funnel, but a squirt gun is less conspicuous and delivers a better stream.
3. Go to the machine. Pump the squirt gun and blast your saline solution into the CHANGE SLOT, not the dollar slot. Don't stop squirting until you smell burning plastic or hear the machine react. It is not unusual for the machine to shake as well. Once it's in the throes of the saline solution, hit all of the cola buttons simultaneously and repeatedly press the change release. Just keep fucking with the buttons and change release until something happens. If nothing happens, keep spraying salt water in until something does. Usually the machine will randomly spew out its soda while coins pour out of the change slot. This can be quite loud, so resist the temptation to laugh or scream. The added noise will definitely draw attention to your nocturnal activities.

Sometimes even after you have intensively sprayed the machine, nothing happens. If this occurs, simply snap off the change light with a screwdriver and begin spraying the saline

solution into the new opening. This will usually do the trick. If that doesn't work, tip the fuckin' machine over — it's ruined anyway and maybe some soda will fall out.

Although this method is almost guaranteed to give you soda and change, it will absolutely destroy the machine. Most of these machines are owned by private citizens, who are just trying to make a living. You should make an effort to find out who owns the machine you are about to destroy. Of course, most machines at large hotels are owned by a bunch of corporate bastards who make money by charging you to sleep.

Tip: Make sure you wear gloves when you salt machines. For some reason, the massive salt deposits, mangled metal, and empty change bin tend to indicate that the machine has been tampered with.

This may shock you, but some people have been known to use electric stun guns on vending machines, slots, and other similar mechanical devices. The effect on the machines is very similar to salting; there is, however, the added risk of electrocution, so be careful. The major advantage of this method is the fact that it leaves little or no evidence.

Stringing

This trick comes from the casino cheats who like to rob the one-armed bandits. It is based on a simple principle: recycling. The same coin is used to tap in credits on a machine. The coin is dropped in, then pulled up, then dropped in again.

Now let's apply some simple logic here. Casinos hire entire engineering teams to design cheat-proof slot machines. Since slot machines are among the casino's biggest bread-winners, security for the machines is extremely high. No matter what engineering principles are used, it is next to impossible to stop stringers from cashing in. As a result, the eye in the sky compensates for the engineering weakness.

Now let's compare the security of the average pop machine. What security? If stringing works in the high-security environment of the casinos, there is absolutely no reason why it would not work on your local vending machine. In the unlikely event that stringing doesn't work, you can resort to the use of slugs.

Supplies: *Krazy glue, fishing line or thin but strong string, and a quarter.*

Use Krazy glue to attach the fishing line to the top of a quarter. Make sure the glue connects the string to the quarter on the rough edge that surrounds the quarter. Don't glue it at the side.

Hold the string between your thumb and index finger. Drop the quarter into the change slot. You should hear a click. If you don't hear a click, then dangle the quarter around until you do. Each click equals one quarter credit.

Tip: Don't drill a hole in the quarter, use Krazy glue. It's easier and it allows you to destroy the evidence. A drilled out quarter tied through with fishing line is quite incriminating.

If someone approaches you while you are stringing a machine, just act as if the machine won't take your quarter. If you want to use sleight of hand, then turn your back to the person, obstructing their view of your hands while you dip into your pocket, switch out the stringed quarter, and bring out a regular quarter. If you don't want to use a sleight of hand, then just break off the fishing line.

Slugging

Don't worry, you're not going to have to smash your fist into anything. Simply go to a hardware store with a quarter, nickel, and a dime. Compare them with the plethora of

slugs/washers in the store. You will find at least one match for one of the coins. Slugs are generally much less expensive than the denomination you substitute them for. Buy a few and test them out. When you find one that works, you're set.

Chapter Two

The Person-to-Person Switch

All you need to perform the following impostor-cons are a uniform and a lot of nerve. You should never under rate the significance of a uniform. People have been conditioned since birth to accept uniforms as symbols of status and power. When you were born, your mother would hand you — the fruit of her womb — to anybody wearing a nurse's smock or a doctor's coat. Think about it: would she just hand *you* over to some pimply teenager in jeans and a t-shirt? Of course not! But replace those jeans with white pants and that t-shirt with a smock, and you're in the hands of a stranger. This chapter will teach you how to take advantage of this conditioning.

Door-to-Door Charity

Supplies: *Clipboard, any written form that leaves a customer copy, phony ID card, and a uniform.*

It is important that you do a little research beforehand. Look for a prominent charity in your local phone book. Ideally, you should find a charity or uniform first, then base your fake ID on the uniform or charity. If you can't find a uniform with your charity's name on it, just buy the plainest uniform you can find. Most charities have bumper stickers and sometimes, even patches with their logo on them — pick these items up. If they don't have patches, don't worry. All you have to do is make sure that your fake ID badge is visible.

Constructing Your Fake ID Badge

You will base your fake ID card on the charity's logo. Just type the name of the organization on a small rectangular piece of thick paper; get a passport size photo of yourself, glue it in the left hand corner. Affix the logo from the bumper sticker to the paper. Then take the thing to a copy shop and have them laminate it for you. If you are too scared to take it there, then buy a laminator. I must warn you that laminators can be a bit expensive. Think of it as an investment. The return from your first con will definitely cover your initial expense. Read *Counterfeit ID Made Easy*, by Jack Luger (available from Loompanics Unlimited), for more information about constructing phony identification.

Next, you need to buy a badge clip. You can get them at most stationery stores. While you are at the stationery store, pick up some donation forms or any preprinted form that leaves a customer copy.

You are almost ready to hit the streets. Now all you have to do is write out what you will say. Make sure you litter your script with key phrases such as: save the children, hospital, cancer, make dreams come true, assist the disabled, help the children/disabled/mentally ill, etc. Try to avoid mentioning religion, unless you know that the victim is religious. You can find out a lot about your victims by observing the condition of their yard, the type of car they drive, and their attire.

The form, badge, and uniform will convince people that you are who you say you are. Take advantage of the written word — people are convinced by things they see in writing. Proudly parade your clipboard and badge as you go door to door asking for money. When you do this, refer to your prewritten script. This will add legitimacy to your plea because most charities give their volunteers a rehearsed spiel.

As long as you don't act like you are doing something highly illegal, no one will question your integrity. If the person offers to write a check, let him/her. And let him/her write it to the name of the charity you are using. If you ask them to write it out to anybody other than the charity, you will arouse suspicion. If you want to be a good guy for once, you can actually give the charity the check. But if you want to make money, then you'll have to cash the check at a liquor store/check cashing facility. Your fake ID coupled with a small "inconvenience fee" should be good enough to get you the money.

Tip: You should rehearse your part thoroughly before you venture out into the streets. A good way to accustom yourself to your assumed persona is to go shopping wearing your uniform. This will get you accustomed to being in character around people. The fact that no one accuses you of being a fraud will greatly build your confidence.

To further build confidence, remember that you will control all of the situations you enter. Make an imaginary bubble and claim the territory inside it as your own. Anyone or anything that enters the bubble belongs to you. You rule that domain. As your confidence builds, the bubble expands. This alone will elevate you above the mindless masses.

ATM Guard Scam

Supplies: *Uniform, Badge, Clipboard, and Bank Deposit Slips.*

Go into a bank and take as many deposit slips as you can hold. If anyone asks questions, just tell them that you own your own business and like to keep your deposit records very precise. Make a sign that says: "Out of Order. Give Deposits to Guard on Duty." It's best to have the sign professionally made, but this is not necessary. If you don't have it made, make sure that it is computer printed with a large font size. Avoid writing it out by hand. If you can, you should also place the bank's logo somewhere on the sign. Don't half-ass it. If you don't have the resources to get the logo on, it is best to leave it off.

You can rent or buy police uniforms from most costume stores. If you are lucky, you may find a security uniform at a local thrift store, but this is rare. If the costume store doesn't have one, then look in the phone book under uniforms. Once you have your uniform, you need a phony badge. This may come as a surprise, but most novelty stores sell very official looking badges as gags. While you are there, pick up a fake gun and handcuffs. Wait for the bank to close. Attach your generous supply of deposit slips to your clipboard. Place your sign on the ATM. Now all you have to do is collect each customer's cash and checks. Remember to give them their useless deposit slips. To make the transaction seem more realistic, you should also ask to see their driver's license or other valid forms of identification before receiving their deposit. This con is very easy to work because people have been trained never to question the integrity of a police officer.

Tip: Don't use a real gun because if you get caught you can be prosecuted for armed robbery, which carries a harsh penalty. In some states, you can be prosecuted for armed robbery (brandishing a weapon) even if the gun is not real. You can avoid this by just wearing an empty holster. Don't worry, people are not as observant as you think. They are conditioned to trust people in uniform; and the badge alone convinces them of your authority.

Valet Parking Scam

Wouldn't it be funny if someone paid you to rip them off? Well, after reading this con, you will see just how funny it can be.

Supplies: *Tuxedo, raffle tickets, and plastic name tag.*

Use the same methods you used to get uniforms in the previous cons to obtain a valet

costume. If you can't find one, then just rent a tuxedo. Your local stationery store should have the rest of your supplies. The most important element of this con is the raffle tickets. Once you have the above materials, go to a large mall or restaurant. All you have to do is pretend that you are a valet. Give the victim his stub and drive off with his car. Once you are a safe distance from your mark, look inside his glove compartment for his proof of insurance. This will give you the person's full name and home address. If his house keys are with his car keys, pay a visit to his home. His house is your domain.

Since it is difficult to sell stolen cars — unless you know the right people — it is best just to take whatever money is in the car, in addition to any valuables you find at your victim's residence. The kicker comes when you get tipped.

Tip: Remember to wear white gloves for this con. They are a necessary accessory to your tuxedo, and they don't leave fingerprints.

Drug Deal Con

Requirements: *Nerve and knowledge of drug lingo*

College students at a party-type college are the best marks for this one. You should be in the same age range as your victim, or not too much younger (unless you look old for your age). Your dress should suggest that you have money, but it should not be overdone.

Find someone who likes to light up a lot. Approach the victim and strike up a conversation. You want to convince the sucker that you are friendly. Offer to get him lit. Once he is high and you have bonded, begin to act discouraged, then explain to him that you have a chance to buy some pure shit for wholesale and that lack of money is the only thing holding you back from "the deal." Use lots of drug lingo as you talk about "the deal." Tell him that you will end up paying about \$1 for every dime bag. That's a 90% mark-up. Say anything to him that will get him very excited about "the deal." Once he starts asking questions, give him a few reluctant answers.

If you talk up "the deal" enough, he will offer to help you out. Don't pounce on his offer. Tease him a bit. Make it seem as if YOU don't fully trust HIM. After he has "twisted your arm," reluctantly give in. All you need to do now is receive your reward.

Conclusion

Sleight of hand is more than just hiding objects from plain view. It involves concealing the truth and controlling perception. A good sleight-of-hand artist manipulates the minds of his spectators as well as the physical objects that come into contact with his hands.

If you have paid attention to this book, then you should have realized that I presented two ways of running cons: one, play on the sucker's belief that he can get something for nothing, and two, use the victim's emotions and perception against him — tug on his heart strings, exploit his conditioning. Remember that deep down most people want to be tricked. Show them a rainbow, they'll look for the gold. Your manipulations create rainbows, their ignorance does the rest. You are no longer one among the mindless mass of followers. You have the power to profit from the public's simple-mindedness. Use it wisely.

Additional Resources

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